

## Getting to Know Stephen: Joyce and truth-to-life narrative

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On April 26, 1906, Joyce responded to publisher Grant Richards' request that he emend the manuscript of *Dubliners* – including the omission of an entire story, 'Two Gallants' – in order to placate Richards' printer:

Naturally, I should be sorry if our relations ended in such a way.  
[*Not being published*] would be almost a disaster to me but I am  
afraid the service which you ask me to do for your printer's  
conscience is *not in my power*.<sup>1</sup> [*my emphasis*]

Joyce does not specify what higher agency disempowers him and there is perhaps a general assumption that what he has in mind is what we have in mind when we think 'artistic integrity'. But notice that Joyce does not insist on his right to *freedom* of artistic expression, rather the opposite. Joyce makes a moral case against the moral qualms of the printer but, far from being based on any individual right to *freedom*, it assumes a *constraint*: a writer is obliged to be true to what he 'has seen and heard':

My intention was to write a chapter of the *moral* history of my  
country ...I have written it for the most part in a style of *scrupulous*  
meanness and with the *conviction* that he is a very *bold* man who  
*dares* to alter in the presentment, still more to *deform*, whatever he  
has seen and heard.<sup>2</sup> [*my emphasis*]

The general terms of this correspondence are well known – especially since sections of the correspondence were included in the Scholes and Litz Viking Critical Library edition in 1969 – but just as familiarity tends to blur rather than clarify precisely what exactly Joyce meant by 'scrupulous meanness', it also tends to prevent us noticing the details of Joyce's stand, which is based on a lack of autonomy, with the implication that he is controlled by some higher agency.

The language of moral theology reminds us that while he had rejected the institution of the Catholic Church Joyce retained elements of the intellectual apparatus that had shaped his youthful thinking. What is at issue is the writer's attitude to 'whatever he has seen and heard', which is to say, 'the world as experienced'. The position of the writer is similar to that of a human being in the presence of God's creation. The good writer will respect that creation. The bad writer, who 'dares' to falsify it, is 'bold' in the sense of demonstrating dangerous bravery. Why? Presumably because he risks the wrath of the Creator who may, in the manner of the Christian god, inflict a terrible punishment on those who have the temerity to 'deform' His creation. Given this quasi-religious 'conviction', Joyce insists

[it] is *not my fault* that the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal  
hangs round my stories. I seriously believe that you will retard the

course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from  
having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished  
looking-glass.<sup>3</sup> [*my emphasis*]

The truth is that Dublin is not a paradise, Dubliners no angels, and the good writer – the writer who is true to experience – will reflect place and people exactly as they are and not as social or literary conventions would wish them to be.

Given the blurred edges of this episode in Joycean hagiography it is salutary to remind ourselves that most unpublished writers – even those in far less straitened circumstances than Joyce then was in faraway Trieste – tend to be biddable in the presence of a potential publisher. Joyce was anything but biddable, thanks to a remarkable – possibly unique – self-belief that has often been described as messianic, another religious term suggesting the almost supernatural seriousness with which this ‘priest of the eternal imagination’ approached his art.<sup>4</sup>

Joyce’s beliefs in his own artistic greatness and in the gospel of literary truth-to-life were shared by his brother Stanislaus even before James had begun to write short stories. Stannie’s diary is painfully honest in its depiction of life in ‘Bleak House’, equally frank in his accounts of his own deficiencies and of his brother’s greatness. His apparently hopeless circumstances did not prevent him from literary experiments, most notably his efforts to mimic stylistically the gradual loss of consciousness in a person on the edge of sleep, which he later claimed had helped James to discover the interior monologue.<sup>5</sup>

It is interesting – if ultimately futile – to wonder why this obsession with truth-to-life in literature flourished so spectacularly in the fallen world of the Joyce household at a time when it had failed to root in the rest of Ireland. A likely primal cause was Joyce’s early immersion in his Catholic catechism, which taught that a lie was always sinful, that nothing could excuse it and that, unless cancelled by the sacrament of penance, it would lead to the fire of Purgatory, possibly to eternal damnation in Hell. If so, it is ironic that one of the first victims of Joyce’s lie-detection was the very religion that had inculcated it.

Other ‘falsehoods’ included his father’s attempt to cloak the squalor of their domestic circumstances with a show of gentility, the tendency of the Irish people to delude themselves with various national, religious and political fantasies, the susceptibility of people in general to cultural norms such as military honour and romantic love. Joyce’s youthful worship of Ibsen was based on his belief that here was a writer with the vision to see and the courage to express the truth behind the curtains of social pretence, to be true to life-as-it-was rather than to hollow conventions, social or literary.

When he began to write short stories Joyce turned to what he knew – the lives of ordinary lower middle class people – rather than the more conventional exploits and adventures – military, criminal or romantic – of characters far removed from the vast majority of readers. Joyce’s stories highlight the inner lives of the kind of people who would never have taken centre-stage in traditional literature. To express the thought processes of such people *as-they-were* rather than *as-they-had-been-presented* in

traditional literature he needed a new narrative style that would re-enact their existence, one that was more *true to life* than anything in current fiction.

Very early on, he realised that Standard Literary English was the language of an educated elite (of which he was a member) inherently elitist in perspective, instinctively looking down on the lower, less educated orders and inevitably condescending to them as *others*, outsiders, sometimes comic, sometimes savage, always different. But Joyce knew that no people *see themselves* as *others*; if he were to write ‘the truth’ about lower middle class life, he would have to sabotage Standard Literary Language. This he began to do in *Dubliners* with his use of what we now call ‘focalised narrative’.<sup>6</sup>

‘Clay’ is a good example. Maria, the central character, is a spinster and the butt of many marriage jokes. Physically unattractive, exceptionally small and with a nose and a chin so hooked that they almost meet when she laughs, she is what would commonly be called ‘ugly’, the kind of woman who in traditional literature would be used to generate grotesque comedy. Remembering that the story takes place on Hallowe’en some have connected her with the witches believed to be very active that night. But she is not a witch; she is a credible woman – a sister and aunt and a worker – and sees herself not as others see her – for example the young men on the tram who pretend not to notice her – but as she sees herself, still attractive with ‘her nice tidy little body’. Joyce wanted to tell Maria’s story not from the position of those who look down on her but from her own level, from the world of which she is the centre (just as we are all the centre of our worlds).

When the story opens Maria is admiring the kitchen she has just cleaned in the laundry where she works.

The kitchen was *spick and span*: the cook said you could see yourself in the big copper boilers. The fire was *nice and bright* and on one of the side-tables were four *very big* barmbracks. These barmbracks seemed uncut; but if you went closer you would see that they had been cut into long thick even slices and were ready to be handed round at tea. Maria had cut them herself.<sup>7</sup> [*my emphases*]

The reader may not – initially – be very interested in the state of the barmbracks in the kitchen of a Magdalene laundry; but Maria is, for the simple reason that she herself has cut them so skilfully that she stands back to admire her handiwork. Joyce wants us to take an interest not so much in the Maria’s knife as in the world she inhabits, a world in which her success with the knife is a matter of pride and crucial to her sense of her superior status in the laundry.

Judged as Standard Literary English the opening paragraph is a failure: the clichés and unsophisticated phrases (which I have emphasised) have no place in current literary usage and belong in popular uneducated vernacular. This is exactly what Joyce requires, the language of Maria to express the mental world of Maria without any distorting filter. A traditional writer wishing to emphasise Maria’s thoughts would have put them in direct speech but Joyce chose to infuse the third person narrative with Maria’s own grammar and lexicon in order to bring us as casually as possible into her

world.

The technical subtleties of *Dubliners* were not such as to challenge the average reader and the same could be said of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* where the language becomes progressively more complex and distinct to reflect the growth of Stephen's mind and personality. *Ulysses* is another matter: widely considered the greatest novel of the twentieth century, it is even more widely known as the most difficult.

For long a favoured university text, millions of words have been written about it without ever denting its daunting reputation, to such an extent that it could be argued that the nature and sheer amount of academic commentary has formed a psychological barrier between the novel and the general reader. Levels of literacy may have fallen since 1922 but it is hard for us today to credit Joyce's claim that a woman of little education such as his Aunt Josephine only needed a summary of the *Odyssey* in order to read a book that was perplexing most of Europe.

You say there is a lot of it you don't understand. I told you to read the *Odyssey* first ... Then buy at once *The Adventures of Ulysses* (which is Homer's story told in simple English much abbreviated) by Charles Lamb. You can read it in a night and buy it at Gill's or Browne and Nolan's. Then have a try at *Ulysses* again.<sup>8</sup>

It's as if Joyce, having spent almost a decade immersed in the technical problems of reflecting ordinary life, had come to believe that ordinary people could instinctively recognise their own existence in *Ulysses*, that provided ordinary readers were alerted to the Homeric analogy, they'd manage. The intervening years have suggested the opposite: while the relationship between *Ulysses* and the *Odyssey* can be quickly explained, it takes a little time for ordinary readers to appreciate the differences between Joyce's account of everyday life and that of the traditional novelist.

In the traditional novel the omniscient narrator begins by providing sufficient introductory information concerning time and place and character to enable the conventional reader to make almost immediate sense of the plot. The reader of *Ulysses* is given no such helping hand.

Whatever about first time readers today (who can hardly have avoided the cultural chatter of almost a hundred years) their 1922 predecessors probably assumed that Buck Mulligan, Kinch and Stephen Dedalus were waking up in a rather unconventional house somewhere in the Anglophone world. It would be a couple of pages before some of them identified the Sandycove Martello Tower.

Gradually the first-time reader deduces that the opening scene is set in a structure the top of which contains a gunrest and offers a clear view of the surroundings, sea, land and mountains. In the paragraph beginning 'Solemnly' it is not yet clear that 'the tower' is not part of the surroundings. (On the second page we learn that Haines is staying for the moment 'in this tower'.) Wherever we are, there is a parapet (soon to be identified as made of granite) in which the gunrest is set and on which Mulligan rests his shaving mirror and Stephen leans as he watches 'the mailboat clearing the harbourmouth of Kingstown', at which point readers familiar with Dublin would have guessed that

Mulligan and Stephen are on the observation platform that is the roof of the Sandycove Martello Tower on an unusually fine summer morning.

Why does Joyce withhold this information?

A few pages in, the attentive reader will have some kind of an idea why, will have realised that the narrative is not what it seemed to be – a conventional omniscient narrative – but a development of the focalised narrative encountered in *Dubliners*. Only the most sensitive readers will have been troubled by the slightly personal rhythm of the opening words: ‘Stately, plump Buck Mulligan’. Others will go with the flow until further down the page:

[Mulligan] peered sideways up and gave a long slow whistle of call,  
then paused awhile in rapt attention, his even white teeth glistening  
here and there with gold points. Chrysostomos.<sup>9</sup>

Where does this ‘Chrysostomos’ come from? Whose erudition prompts an ironic remark on Mulligan’s dental fillings that sits so uneasily in an omniscient narrative?

Somebody who, like Stephen, was taught the history of the early Christian Church would have been told of a celebrated preacher whose eloquence earned him the title ‘golden-mouthed’ or, in the original Greek, ‘chrysostomos’ and it will soon become clear that the learned ironist is indeed Stephen. ‘Chrysostomos’ is the first clear hint that the chapter is seen through his eyes and ears and mind. Joyce eases us into Stephen’s world, giving us for the most part the comfort of sentences but adding more and more in the form of what we call ‘stream of consciousness’ or ‘interior monologue’.

We are initially confused by the apparent confusion of grammatical person in the following brief paragraph:

*Stephen bent forward* and peered at the mirror held out to him, cleft  
by a crooked crack. Hair on end. As he and others see *me*.  
Who chose this face for *me*? This dogsbody to rid of vermin. It  
asks *me* too.<sup>10</sup> [*my emphases*]

But we know for certain that we are inside Stephen’s brain when the old milkwoman arrives, provoking Mulligan to lively conversation while Stephen, characteristically, looks on and thinks.

He watched her pour into the measure and thence into the jug rich  
white milk, *not hers*. Old shrunken paps. She poured again a  
measureful and a tilly. Old and secret she had entered from a  
morning world, *maybe a messenger*. She praised the goodness of  
the milk, pouring it out. Crouching by a patient cow at daybreak  
in the lush field, *a witch on her toadstool*, her wrinkled fingers  
quick at the squirting dugs. They lowed about her whom they  
knew, dewsilky cattle. *Silk of the kine and poor old woman,*  
*names given her in old times. A wandering crone, lowly form of*  
*an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer, their*  
*common cuckquean, a messenger from the secret morning. To*

*serve or to upbraid, whether he could not tell, but scorned to beg  
her favour.*<sup>11</sup> [my emphases]

This is very difficult for everybody, slightly less so for Irish people, slightly less so again for those as knowledgeable about Irish history – political and literary – as Stephen is.

I have used italics to distinguish between two modes in this paragraph. In ordinary type we have those of Stephen's mental reactions that are based on common sense perceptions that he shared – more or less – with Mulligan and Haines and, by extension, readers like us: an old woman arrives and delivers milk that she had taken from cows earlier that morning, praising it as she pours. The elements in bold type are removed from common sense. What sort of mind would it cross that the milk in the jug had come from the old woman's shrunken breast? Would suspect that this old woman was not merely an old woman but perhaps an angel, a spirit bringing intelligence from another world? Or a witch? Or even Ireland?<sup>12</sup> An Ireland in servitude to England (represented by Haines) and what Stephen referred to in *A Portrait* as 'the indispensable informer'<sup>13</sup> (Mulligan)? An Ireland to whom/which Stephen refuses to pray? There is only one candidate, Stephen, who has a tendency to see those around him as not merely physical but symbolic of some hidden meaning. ('Signatures of all things I am here to read.'<sup>14</sup>)

This makes his thoughts difficult to follow but everything about Stephen is difficult, especially in the beginning, because as yet we know so little about him. As we follow him through the novel, accumulating details about him and his family and friends and his intellectual interests and his attitude to Ireland and so on, we'll get to know him much better; and should we begin the novel again he'll be as familiar to us as an old companion.

But why does Joyce make us wait?

Because it's true to life.

Encountering the major characters – Stephen and Bloom – is like meeting real people who are not yet but who will soon become our intimate friends. Initially all we have is what we can deduce from their appearance, tone of voice, topics and level of conversation, but with every meeting we learn more about them – their past, their opinions on important matters, topics they return to, topics they avoid – and gradually we can compose a complex personality for them, confirming some earlier impressions, correcting others. The more we know of their trials and tribulations, hopes and ambitions, the more readily and fully we understand them.

There is another true-to-life principle at work in *Ulysses* that makes it initially resistant to casual reading: characters do not tell the reader what the characters do not tell themselves. Why does Stephen, whose transient thoughts we are allowed to share, not *tell* us who and where he is? Because he *knows* who and where he is and, just as when we arise in the morning we don't (normally) need to remind ourselves who and where we are, neither does Stephen (or in later pages Bloom or Molly).

Another trap that waits for the inattentive reader reflects the fact that our lives are a combination of private and public, subjective and objective, on the one hand what we think and what we imagine

doing in the privacy of our own minds, on the other the conversations we have with those we encounter.

While walking along Sandymount Strand Stephen contemplates visiting his aunt Sara who lives nearby. As often happens for convenience sake, the first sentence is in third person, the rest in Stephen's interior monologue. But with the reference to 'your artist brother Stephen' it becomes impossible to make sense of what follows as Stephen simply thinking his own thoughts. They are all Stephen's thoughts but in his thoughts he imagines other characters speaking, notably his father. Once we realise this, our problems are easily solved.<sup>15</sup> (In the following extract I have added stage directions in bold.)

His pace slackened. Here. Am I going to aunt Sara's or not? My consubstantial father's voice. **[Simon Dedalus, addressing one of Stephen's brothers or sisters]** Did you see anything of your artist brother Stephen lately? No? Sure he's not down in Strasburg terrace with his aunt Sally? Couldn't he fly a bit higher than that, eh? **[Still Simon Dedalus, now imitating Stephen's Aunt Sara's husband Ritchie Goulding]** And and and and tell us, Stephen, how is uncle Si? **[Simon Dedalus, back in propria persona]** O, weeping God, the things I married into! De boys up in the hayloft. The drunken little costdrawer and his brother, the cornet player. Highly respectable gondoliers! And skeweyed Walter sirring his father, no less! **[Simon Dedalus now in mocking imitation of Ritchie Goulding's son Walter]** Sir. Yes, sir. No, sir. **[Simon Dedalus back again in propria persona]** Jesus wept: and no wonder, by Christ.<sup>16</sup>

As soon as we realise what is happening here we recognise that this is what we do ourselves: imagining a person and then – in our imagination – hearing that person speak. (In our imaginations we are capable of perfect ventriloquism; our difficulties only begin when we try to do it *viva voce*.)

I pull the wheezy bell of their shuttered cottage: and wait. They take me for a dun, peer out from a coign of vantage.<sup>17</sup>

There follows a standard detailed transcription of the conversation in his uncle's bedroom between Stephen, Walter and Richie and, following on from this, Stephen's thoughts on a range of subjects. Then, almost two pages further on:

He halted. I have passed the way to aunt Sara's. Am I not going there? Seems not.<sup>18</sup>

The entire visit was imagined. Stephen had not *actually* pulled the wheezy bell nor had he *actually* visited his uncle and cousin; but *mentally* it was as if he had. It is another process we recognise from our own lives: we think of doing something and automatically imagine doing it and for the moment it is as real as anything else. In all likelihood most lives are mostly experienced subjectively and in private, the remainder objectively in public. When we are thinking we are not inclined to tell ourselves that we

are thinking as opposed to acting, just as when we are acting we don't tend to remind ourselves that we are acting as opposed to *merely* thinking.

The traditional novelist might have written something like this: "passing close to where his aunt Sara lived, *he wondered* if he should drop in. *He imagined* pulling the bell and being invited by Walter up to his uncle's bedroom where his uncle ..." This tells us *what happened* but gives us hardly any indication of *what it felt like when it was happening*. The traditional novelist *reports indirectly* what has already happened and is concluded; the purpose of Joyce's narrative invention is to *represent directly* and thereby re-enact mental processes as and how they occur.

The most obvious narrative innovation is the extensive use of interior monologue. In *Dubliners*, reflecting the fact that uneducated Dubliners did not always speak Standard English, Joyce exploited focalised narrative to suggest their own experience of the world and not that attributed to them by writers using Standard Literary English. In *Ulysses* he goes much further and undermines the basic building block of Standard Literary English, the sentence. Why? As ever, to be as true as possible to the fact that none of us thinks in and few of us even converse in sentences. The grammatical sentence is a literary construction designed for the description of experience that has been completed, considered and its significance decided. Before we begin a correct sentence we must know what we are going to say and how we are going to say it. To simulate our experience of human life as it happens required a narrative mode much more continuous, provisional, open-ended and moving at something like the speed of thought.

Unlike the characters in, say, 'Clay', Stephen is highly educated, well-read, with an acute intelligence and a wide range of metaphysical interests, all of which make his 'streams of consciousness' difficult for the reader – even the well-read reader – to follow. The most obvious characteristic of the 'ungrammatical' syntax of the interior monologue is elision: Joyce's simulation of thought processes in real time demands the elision not only of those components of the literary sentence that are deemed superfluous but also of those cognitive elements that transfer a character's concentration from one idea to another.

A typical example is when – in the milkwoman passage quoted earlier – Stephen begins with an accessible image of 'dewsilky cattle' and then cuts to the more recherché 'Silk of the kine and poor old woman, names given her in old times'. A traditional account would be something like this: 'He imagined milch-cows in a field early on a sunny day, their hides made shiny by dew, and this reminded him of the phrase *silk of the kine*, a translation of *síoda na mbó* in the Gaelic poem in which the eponymous cow represents Ireland, and this in turn reminded him of another traditional name for Ireland, *poor old woman*, which in turn made him consider the poor old milkwoman as an incarnation of Ireland.'

But that is not 'how we think', even those of us who do not aspire to Stephen's learning, and it is precisely 'how we think' that Joyce wishes to represent. The associative links by which Stephen moves from one idea to another are elided in accordance with a principle noted earlier. Stephen does not need to tell himself what he already knows, which means that we cannot 'over-hear' the connecting



phrases.

When Stephen is in company the demands of the objective world exercise some restraint on the free flow of his subjectivity but when he is alone – as the many readers who have faltered at the opening of the third episode ‘Proteus’ will testify – it is even more difficult, if not impossible, to follow all the trapeze artistry of his mind with any confidence.

The opening of ‘Proteus’ finds Stephen on Sandymount Strand pondering the relationship between perception and material reality, drawing – without attribution – on the work of Aristotle, Jakob Boehme, Dante, Archbishop Berkeley and possibly others including Samuel Johnson. Most readers who know this list are indebted to scholarly commentators many of whom have dedicated their professional lives to the study of Joyce and yet, to the best of my knowledge, no commentator has come up with a convincing explanation of why Stephen refers to Aristotle as ‘a millionaire’. ‘Bald he was and a millionaire, *maestro di color che sanno*.’ The Italian phrase – ‘the master of those who know’ – is Dante’s description of Aristotle and is the clearest indication in the paragraph that ‘he’ refers to Aristotle. Aristotle is not traditionally represented as either bald or particularly wealthy in the sense suggested by ‘millionaire’, a word first recorded in French in the early eighteen hundreds and in English a century later.

Did Joyce intend to stump even his closest readers with the allusion? Or did he have in mind an explanation that was clear to him but has eluded everybody else ever since? Or, combining both possibilities, did he – in his customary spirit of truth-to-life – set out to intimate that, as in even the most intimate of relationships, there are aspects of our friends we never fully understand?

Some hundreds of pages into the book we may feel that we know Stephen quite well. We’ve not only encountered him ourselves in a variety of situations, we’ve also heard something of the view his father takes of him and noted Mr Bloom’s envious admiration. We are granted an intimate access to his thoughts and feelings that everybody else is denied and so, while we may find the details of his musings beyond our reading range, we are surely entitled to assume that we know him almost as well as he knows himself and better than anybody else knows him. This may be true but it is also true that our most intimate friend – like life itself – may be full of surprises.

In the brothel a drunken Stephen attempts to light a cigarette but, as Lynch can see, he’s holding the match too far from the cigarette.

#### STEPHEN

*(brings the match near his eye)* Lynx eye. Must get glasses.  
Broke them yesterday. Sixteen years ago. Distance. The eye  
sees all flat. *(He draws the match away. It goes out.)* Brain  
thinks. Near:far. Ineluctable modality of the visible ...<sup>19</sup>

Stephen’s mind may get to ‘lynx’ – a wild cat famed for its sharpness of sight – simply through the phonic connection with ‘lynch’ (as it will presently get to ‘Sphinx’) or it may be that the idea of sight immediately recalls his earlier musings on the ‘ineluctable modality of the visible’ which remind him of Aristotle’s claim that the sight of the lynx surpassed mortal sight. But more interesting than these

learned possibilities is the fact that Stephen is without his spectacles, which he had broken the previous day, as he had (as described in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) broken them sixteen years previously when he was a student at Clongowes. This means that, far from being lynx-eyed, he is myopic, his vision of the world flat and blurred. Which in turn sends us back to the beginning of the book to such incidents as the arrival of the milkwoman and obliges us to re-consider our earlier impressions of what Stephen *actually* saw and why he imagined what he imagined.

Knowing that his perception of the world lacks the clearly defining outline provided by 20:20 vision such as that enjoyed by Bloom, we can see why his thoughts are less confined by external objective reality and more susceptible to flights of subjective fantasy. Or at least those of us who are myopic can see this. To see the world as Stephen sees it, we need only take off our spectacles; more/less fortunate readers must go to an optician whose lenses will abnormalise their vision.

Though an extreme example, the requirement – three quarters way through the book – that we return mentally to the beginning and review our reading of Stephen in the light of this new information is a fundamental principle of the book. By rejecting the traditional technique of front-loading, Joyce doles out information in a linguistic string and, as in the commonest string, the sentence, each new term both adds to and modifies the possible meanings of what existed before. One assumes that, as ever, truth-to-life was Joyce's ambition. Every moment of our experience modifies our understanding of the past: normally the degree of modification is imperceptible but every now and then we experience something – a victory or a trauma, either in our own life or the life of another – that forces us to re-assess who or what we are or were.

For all Joyce's advice to his Aunt Josephine, he did not write an open book but one to be opened by readers who would require – *mutatis mutandis* – something of the ingenuity and perseverance that enabled Odysseus to make it home from Troy to Ithaca. The reader faces exceptional obstacles but should learn to derive comfort from realising that they are related to obstacles in our daily lives that our brains have long since overcome. Stung by the news that Aunt Josephine had banished his presentation copy as 'not worth reading' Joyce claimed that 'if *Ulysses* is not worth reading life is not worth living'.<sup>20</sup> It was perhaps the broadest statement he ever made of what he had set out to achieve in *Ulysses* and what, as I have tried to sketch, had been his literary objective from the beginning of his career in fiction: to write a book that would to an unprecedented degree reflect the experience of human life.

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<sup>1</sup> *Letters of James Joyce*, volume one, edited by Stuart Gilbert (London: 1957), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of James Joyce*, volume two, edited by Richard Ellmann (London: 1966), p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, I, 63f.

<sup>4</sup> *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, edited by J. P. Riquelme (Norton Critical Edition, New York: 2007), p. 177.

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<sup>5</sup> See Stanislaus Joyce, *The Complete Dublin Diary of Stanislaus Joyce*, edited by George H. Healy (Dublin: 1994), p. 167, *Letters*, II, 103f.

<sup>6</sup> See Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Voices*, (London: 1978), chapter two.

<sup>7</sup> *Dubliners*, edited by Margot Norris (Norton Critical Edition, New York: 2006), p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> *Letters*, I, 193.

<sup>9</sup> *Ulysses*, edited by Jeri Johnson (World's Classics, Oxford: 1993), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> P. 6.

<sup>11</sup> P. 13f.

<sup>12</sup> 'Silk of the kine' is a translation of a phrase – síoda na mbó – from an Irish poem that was generally taken to be allegorical, with 'the sweet brown cow' referring to Ireland. 'Poor old woman' was another more popular pseudonym for Ireland.

<sup>13</sup> *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, p. 172.

<sup>14</sup> P. 37.

<sup>15</sup> There are two other minor problems that are part of the shape-changing that characterises the episode: 'Sally' and 'Si' are diminutives of Sarah and Simon.

<sup>16</sup> P. 38f.

<sup>17</sup> P. 39.

<sup>18</sup> P. 41.

<sup>19</sup> P. 522

<sup>20</sup> Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, new and revised edition (Oxford, 1982), p. 537.